

## Oral history with 54 year old black female, Colorado; and a 61 year old black female (Transcription)

Begin M9 B(3) CAL SURVEY OF AMERICAN DIALECTS CASSETTE NO. 18 SIDE A The first excerpt is taken from original tape W 14.

INTERVIEWER: Now, tell me about his activities in the old Handy Chapel there.

INFORMANT: Well, later in life <gap> took care of the church. He was the secretary, he was the only, I guess, living member here after <gap> died, who took care of it.

INT: And of course that was your step-sister's mother, right?

INF: Right. He helped her with it and then they had to keep it up-modelled. He was really being, really being in bad repair and they did lots, lots of work remodelling.

INT: Well, did he ever preach in the church?

INF: Oh no, he wasn't that sort of a (unintelligible) at all. His brother was the preacher.

INT: <gap>

INF: Right.

## Library of Congress

INT: (unintelligible) Okay, that's what I've been confused about. Now, but your father was a good maintenance man and giving the (unintelligible).

INF: Right. Right. (unintelligible) He went around and raised money to keep, remodel the church and things like that.

INT: Do you have a pretty good size congregation there?

C 18 page 2

INF: No. No, it's almost discontinued.

INT: You know, we've talked many times about it, we feel it's the oldest church, and we hope we've been (unintelligible) at preserving the building's history. I imagine that you've had a lot of happy activities happen around there.

INF: Yes.

INT: Particularly in the early days.

INF: Yes.

INT: Was that sort of used as a meeting place, too, many times?

## Library of Congress

INF: They, when I was a child, they rented the church out. They didn't have a minister here at that time. They rented out to different denominations. And then different ministers would come in. They would have church time-to-time. (unintelligible) by the people here at that time. They were such few in number, but there was never a large amount. Then my uncle <gap> he took over the church. And he had a real large church when they for, a number of years.

INT: Do you have a minister there now?

INF: No. Well, yes. Not a minister, sort of a missionary.

INT: That comes ...

INF: No.

INT: She lives there?

INF: Mmm-hmm.

INT: Now, is the little house next to the church where the minister usually lives?

INF: No, the horse manger that was built adjacent to the church.

C 18 page 3

## Library of Congress

INT: Connects to it.

INF: Right. Then we have two other individual buildings that they rented-out to the poor or to the black. Because years ago it was almost impossible for a black person to get into a motel or a hotel.

INT: I see. So you had to sort of provide the quarters for these

INF: Right, right. So anyone that came through here, you know, that was down on their luck, or didn't have, or a widow woman or something, they would rent or let them use these places, so until you know, they had some job or moved-on, whatever.

SECOND INFORMANT (INF 2): (unintelligible) until they had money to go to school or ...

INF: Right. That's what they would use the money for at that time.

INF 2: (unintelligible) or if they wanted to go to college. (unintelligible).

INT: Right. Your funds were used for many things. To help people. And as you told me earlier, you all were really very close-knit and all worked together

INF: Right.

INT: Of course your numbers were small, and of course you had a caring heart or you wouldn't have done it anyway.

## Library of Congress

INF: Right. It was my family upbringing.

INT: And I wanted to ask you about some, you probably had special programs, and, did you have a piano in the church?

INF: Yes! We had a piano and a (unintelligible) and bought an organ.

INT: And looking at that little record book that you found in the

C 18 page 4

church. They had a Sunday school, and I wondered if you read a lot of things.

INF: Yes.

INT: That always was a big part of your service?

INF: Right. (unintelligible)

INT: Do you happen to have any of the hymnals that were used?

INF: Yes, I have quite a few, but ...

INT: Are some of them still at the church? The original ones.

## Library of Congress

INF: No, I'm afraid we do not have any of the original ones. A few years back. Was quite a few years, it was quite a few years back, the different churches here, I do believe, organized a library there. and a lot of the books, especially the hymn books and things like that, were discarded because they were of no value at that time, you know. So we lost quite a few things, which means for the (unintelligible) that the church (unintelligible) were given to us. Which we thought was quite an honor at that time.

INT: Well, many times things of history are destroyed, and then we look back and we wish we still had them, but ...

INF: Right, right.

INT: That's true of all of us. Do you still have a library that ...

INF: Yes, we still have quite a few of the books. The last time I was in the church, I looked-up, yes. But that was the library of the church for a long time.

INT: So it's probably grown, like once it was started I guess people contributed books to it. Of your own people.

INF: Probably so. I don't know what conditions are right now.

INT: You haven't been for a visit in awhile. Well, in your growing-

C 18 page 5

## Library of Congress

up and going to school, did you participate in a lot of the musical programs at school? Did you like to sing?

INF: No, I can't sing. I'm like my father. I love to sing. (laughs).

INT: Well, you seem to be able to recite poetry.

INF: Yes, I've always loved poetry. Yes, I love poetry, but I have, we, I don't remember having too many plays at school. At school too much.

INT: When you got your, you got together for your, oh, special occasions. What are some of the happy times you remember when your families got together, and how you celebrated?

INF: We always sang when my (unintelligible) and my aunt would come, and my uncle was here, and we always got around the piano and sang. Or if we didn't have a piano, they sang and would (unintelligible).

INT: They probably knew a lot of, did they sing a lot of hymns?

INF: Oh definitely, that was it. All of us.

INT: Singing hymns. Folk songs?

INF: It was always just Negro spirituals. Always. Always.

## Library of Congress

INT: Do you have any of them here?

INF: No, I don't, because ...

INT: It seems they would be mostly sung from the heart anyway, I suppose.

INF: Right.

INT: For most of them knew the words. Did they then teach them to their children?

INF: My father was the only one that had children. My aunt had an adopted daughter. And of course my uncle had an adopted daughter. But my father was the only one that had children. But they sang both

C 18 page 6

beautiful. But my aunties all were school teachers, and they majored, two of them majored in music. So it was sort of, well, you kind of forgot yourself in all this beautiful music that they could produce. My uncle, he liked to play the clarinet a little bit, and he loved to sing and move with it. He wasn't the best singer, but he was the loudest. (laughs).

INT: He just groaned.



## Library of Congress

INF: Right. My father enjoyed it so much. He just, was just the main. We just knew that was going to come up. We all, and the neighbors would come over and just to listen to him.

INT: Oh, I can imagine. Don't you wish you had a tape-recording of that!

INF: Oh boy! <gap> did quite a bit of taping. He really did. But I don't know whether it's all erased or ...

INT: You know where his tapes might be?

INF: No. See when, you know, after he passed and then my aunt passed several years later, then they came and just cleaned everything out of the house.

INT: I see.

INF: I don't know whether they kept any of that or, I don't think he (unintelligible) or anything in it, you know. They just abandoned the house, just took everything and put it out.

INT: Well, I expect that your mother and your family all had some pretty family celebrations, had some special recipes, special dishes which you had made that were particularly delicious.

INF: Well, let's see. My auntie was (unintelligible) her Spanish rice

## Library of Congress

C 18 page 7

and for potato salad. And we usually always had spare ribs, barbecue, my uncle was very good at (unintelligible).

INF 2: ... crest of corn and hash.

INT: Now that sounds interesting!

INF 2: (unintelligible)

INT: Everybody'd go where?

INF 2: (inaudible) About two or three o'clock in the morning and you'd have it all ready, a big pot of hash. And everybody's getting to eat -- we'd go home and get some food about five or six o'clock in the morning. About every Christmas we'd do that!

INT: That sounds fun! And it was delicious, eh?

INF 2: Oh, gee it was. I never, I'll forget, full of kids, we just had the biggest time.

INF: It's always (inaudible)

INT: That was the crested peas ...

## Library of Congress

INF: Right. (inaudible)

(MOVE MICROPHONE)

INT: That was, sounds like wonderful.

INF 2: (unintelligible) you'd have a big dinner in the back yard, and people'd be here, so many, you'd never seen so many people at one time.

INT: That's wonderful. Did you ever learn how to make that famous hash?

INF 2: (laughs) I don't think anybody did!

INT: Nobody was, attempt, to make it that good.

INF: (inaudible)

C 18 page 8

INT: Did you also make biscuits to go with them?

INF 2: No, we never had biscuits.

INF: Sometimes we had biscuits, but that was just a, something unusual.

## Library of Congress

INT: I see.

INF: We'd call it the (unintelligible), you know.

INT: Hash was it.

INF 2: After you'd been celebrating all day, all the (unintelligible), and after about two or three o'clock in the morning, hash was really good.

INT: I'll have to remember that. <gap> you said you came here about forty years ago.

INF 2: I came here in May in '37.

INT: May of '37. What actually brought you to Grand Junction?

INF 2: I was looking for a job. It was during the Depression, it was really tough times then. So I was just going across the country trying to find some work.

INT: That era of our history was pretty rough for everybody.

INF 2: Oh it was, it was.

INT: And, you evidently were very fortunate in finding a job fairly soon, and that was with the railroad.

## Library of Congress

INF 2: No, I shined shoes and done janitor work for about four years. I was here two days, and I got a job, and I've never been without a job since.

INT: Great!

INF 2: I was here just two days when I went to work. I've never been without a job. I've got too much work!

C 18 page 9

INT: Well, I can sure tell you're not afraid of it! And they say if you're not afraid of work, you can usually get a job. And then you met <gap>

INF 2: We got married in '39.

INT: Then did you go to work for the railroad?

INF 2: Went to work for the railroad (unintelligible) the seventh, 1941.

INT: Then you've had, you had, you're one of the senior workers aren't you?

INF 2: Yes, I've been there for quite a while. It'll be 36 years in December. I'm going to try to be retired by that time.

INT: There you are, that's a wonderful record.

## Library of Congress

INF 2: I've never been laid-off down there, that's real important too.

INT: Yes. And even though you could get a job in those, Depression or tail-end of the Depression years, it wasn't always as easy to keep something such as (unintelligible) where they kept cutting back.

INF 2: Yes, that's right. I'd seen them come down there and cut half of them, you know (inaudible).

INT: I wonder how they were taking care of people here at that time. Was there, that couldn't get jobs, do you know what was provided for them? Of course you didn't need, you don't know because you got a job right away.

INF 2: Well, I don't know when did they end that WPA. You know that's work relief aid. I don't know how long it lasted. It must have lasted up to the middle, up to about war time. Then you had your CC camps.